ARCHIVES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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(Note:

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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THE ROMAN CATHOLIC IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF TODAY: A SIGNIFICANT DEBATE IN HOLLAND.

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principle, however, and also on practical grounds in view of the present situation in the Netherlands, it rejects the organization of the political life of a party in terms of a religious confession".

The K.V.P. (Catholic Peoples Party) as a question of principle takes the confessional standpoint. They refer to themselves as a party based on "principle and program" (in theory, they are also open to non-Catholics). They aim to be the United Party of Catholics including Catholics from all social circles. However, in the dispute over the Indonesian question a right-wing group split off from the K.V.P. and formed the Katholieke Nationale Partij (Catholic National Party).

The cooperation of K.V.P. and the Labour Party resulted in a social, economic and cultural policy which contributed to a great extent to a prosperous reconstruction of the Netherlands economy, but this collaboration also involved many difficulties. The Labour Party denies that philosophical and religious convictions are necessarily and indissolubly linked with certain political theories. It points out that the political division between progressive and conservative cuts right across the different confessional groupings, a fact which it considers of decisive importance in the political field. Directly opposed to this are the efforts of the K.V.P. for universal solidarity, which advocates the construction of society which is Christian, i.e. in the spirit of the well-known Papal social encyclicals. The decisive factor in the social outlook of the K.V.P. is the Christian norms by which it interprets and handles the "hic et nunc". It was with regret that the K.V.P. watched a comparatively small, but qualitatively important vanguard of Catholic intellectuals find their place in the Catholic Working Group (K.W.G.) of the Labour Party.

At the elections of 1952 the Labour Party gained a considerable number of votes and for the first time it obtained a few more votes than the K.V.P.; each party got 30 seats in the Tweede Kamer (Lower House). Many Catholic workers in the South of the country had voted for the Labour Party, a phenomenon which gave the K.V.P. much cause for disquietude. There followed a series of explanations between the chairmen of the two parties, Dr. Burger of the Labour Party and Prof. Romme of the K.V.P., at which Prof. Romme challenged the Labour Party to "declare their colours", i.e. to admit that it advocated the Socialism rejected by the Catholic Church and that it was under overwhelmingly non-religious, humanistic influence.

Attitude of the Bishops.

As early as 1946 a Lenten Epistle from the Bishops had reminded Dutch Catholics of the prohibition against joining Socialist trade unions, such as the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (N.V.V., the Netherlands Trade Union Association). This Lenten Epistle contained i.a. the following passage:

"And as political life also must be based on the moral norms of Christendom, they (the Catholics) must always regard it as their duty only to elect those persons, of whom they may rightly expect that they will be guided in this field of legislation and administration by these Christian norms, whose observance in given circumstances is best guaranteed by the Catholics Peoples Party. In this way they will not only serve the interests of religion and good morals, but also the well-being of our beloved motherland."

On the 16th of May 1953 Cardinal de Jong called upon the Dutch Catholics to preserve their unity, which among other things had the result that the K.V.P. invited the Catholic Working Group within the Labour Party (K.W.G.) and the Catholic National Party (K.N.P.) to a discussion. At this debate it appeared that the K.W.G. attached great importance to the collaboration of all Catholics in the cultural and spiritual spheres, and they thought mainly of Catholic Action as a means to this end. Very strong political objections were raised against joining the K.V.P. and the K.N.P. also was opposed to it. While this Catholic discussion was in progress, the Letter from the Bishops was published.

The following passages from the Letter are of importance with regard to the discussions which followed:

Statement of the Catholic Bishops about Political Unity and Socialism.

"So, of late We have often been somewhat perturbed when We discovered that our political unity was apparently discussed rather lightly and superficially. We were also deeply disquieted by the fact that people did not really understand what We had said - although We spoke so solemnly and at such an impressive moment. Some have gone so far as to break away from our unity. Anyone who follows the present development in an unprejudiced way must fear that Our political power and influence will crumble, if people continue to underestimate in this way the value of Our political unity. It is to be feared that this will have serious reprecussions on the social and cultural efforts of the Catholics." (page 35).

"We fear also that the influence of the Socialist Trade Unions and of the Socialist Press and radio will cause increasing secularism, irreligiousness and consequent weakening and decay of moral standards. For although Socialism in the Netherlands tries to free itself from pure materialism, most Socialists do not get any further in their view of life than Humanism or religious Socialism. However that may be, one may safely say that Socialism in our country is still far removed from Christianity. There is every reason to fear that the majority of the members of Socialist associations live without any positive Christian faith. It is the opponents of Christian influence on our people and the advocates of the Humanist Alliance and the League for Sexual Reform who are especially attracted to the Socialist ranks."

"The experience of the past with its frightening de-Christianization of the Socialist milieus makes Us seriously fear for the maintenance of the Christian faith and of Christian morals among those who join the Socialist ranks; the past speaks here an unmistakable language." (page 42).

"We still hold, therefore, that for a Catholic it is not permissable to be a member of Socialist associations, such as the N.V.V. (Netherlands Trade Union Association) and the unions affiliated to it, nor to attend regularly Socialist meetings, to be a regular reader of the Socialist Press, nor to listen regularly to the VARA (Socialist broadcasting program). We maintain the rule that the Holy Sacraments must be refused - and, in case of death without conversion, the ecclesiastical funeral also - to any Catholic who is known to be a member of a Socialist association, or who, without being a member still regularly attends Socialist meetings, or is a regular reader of Socialist periodicals or papers."

"With due regard to all the reserve which We as Bishops impose upon Ourselves regarding the use of political freedom, and keeping Ourselves within the framework of Our spiritual mission, We may and must also express Our views on this matter. In the first place We ascertain that wrong conclusions have been drawn by some people from the fact that We have never forbidden membership. In the light of Our general attitude and of the importance we attach to the unity of Catholics, it must be clear to everybody that the Church authorities are also greatly preoccupied about this point.

"With much regret We also ascertain that in this respect some people apparently do not sufficiently grasp the danger that in this way Our Christian influence in the political field would be seriously weakened and that as a consequence also Our position in social life would be completely undermined in the long run. Those, whom this concerns, should fully realize the responsibility of such serious consequences; if things have not gone so far that is not because, but in spite of their attitude.

"In the third place also the membership of Catholics in itself perturbs Us. Although We gladly rejoice in the fact that this Party makes itself more and more free from the true postulates of Marxism and definitely opposes Communism; although We note with satisfaction that also in this Party the principles of natural law are accepted and that in many respects it does constructive work in the interest of the general well-being, not lastly in the social field; yet there are many, very many things which must make Catholics hesitate and refrain from giving actual support and cooperation to the Labour Party. For a Catholic the basis is lacking here. True Christian politics cannot exist without Christian principles, nor without unity on those principles. In fact, this Party does not make Christian principles the starting-point for its work, and it cannot do so; on the contrary, in this Party there predominates an attitude to life which has no use for the principles and ideals sacred to the Christians. Certain aspects of an attitude which may be called sympathetic and even favourable to part of Our own ideals, may justify cooperation on the social and political plane, but none the less these aspects do not offer a guarantee, now or in the future, for true Christian politics. Moreover, already this Party has directly or indirectly exercised considerable irreligious influence on public life, among other things through giving support in public bodies to the efforts of the Humanist Union. Catholics who join the Labour Party not only support this Party, but also clear the way for closer collaboration between Catholics and Socialist trade unions, the Socialist press and radio, with which the Labour Party has close connections and about which We have expressed Our opinion. Therefore, those who thought that they could become members of the Labour Party, would do well personally to seriously examine their consciences, if they can accept the responsibility for giving such support. For one cannot support and promote a party without being co-responsible for what this party does in the political field, and for what it indirectly supports and promotes in social life.

"We therefore declare:

In the first place that a 'break-through' to the Labour Party is at the same time a break-down of our own Catholic Party.

Secondly, that the consequences of such a 'break-through' cannot be overlooked, particularly with regard to the realization of a Catholic social program on which really so much depends. This is all the more true,

because this 'break-through' cannot remain restricted to the political party; without doubt it is going to penetrate also to the Socialist trade union, the press and to other domains of public life.

Thirdly, that this Party has no basis at all and offers no guarantee for true Christian politics.

In the fourth place, that Catholic membership of this Party implies a serious responsibility, also in view of the support which this Party gives directly or indirectly to un-Christian tendencies.

"Dear Believers, whatever good intentions may have induced some Catholics to take part in the so-called 'break-through', Your Bishops are of opinion that this is not the way to build up society in a Christian spirit and to carry through the reform of morals which Pope Pius XI considers so necessary. They are of the opinion that it is irresponsible to go this way. And if Your Bishops do not take any sanctions, then they refrain on the one hand because it concerns here a relatively small group which moreover can understand without sanctions what the Bishops mean, and on the other hand because of a special reserve which they want to exercise in relation to the use of political freedom, and also because of Our great concern for the well-being of the souls of those who up till now have not listened to Our Episcopal admonition and whom We hope will now understand Our message. We trust that it will be clear to everybody what the Bishops mean and ask." (pages 44, 45 & 46).

Reactions to the Letter of the Netherlands Hierarchy.

Immediately after publication of the Episcopal Letter the parliamentary leader of the Labour Party, Dr. Burger, expressed his disquietude with regard to the consequences for democracy in the Netherlands, and the following day the chairman of the K.W.G. (Catholic Working Group in the Labour Party), Mr. J. Willems, delivered a broadcast speech in which among other things he expressed his concern for a Catholic community which will not allow its "pioneers" freedom to choose forms of collaboration along different lines. Without wanting to anticipate a statement from the K.W.G. he pointed out that as a sincere Catholic his conscience was seriously distressed by this Episcopal Letter.

From the Catholic side it was generally assumed that in obedience to the Bishops the K.W.G. ought to join the K.V.P., and most Catholic commentaries pointed out that the doctrinal first part of the Episcopal Letter was in fact the most important and that therefore the Episcopal Letter, taken as a whole, should lie outside the sphere of political discussions. According to the Roman Catholic newspaper, the "Volkskrant" of May 31st, the Bishops should not have approached the more political questions of the membership of the N.V.V. and of the Labour Party from the standpoint of power politics, but exclusively from considerations of pastoral care. The growing disquietude over the apostasy and indifference to the Christian Church in the Netherlands will undoubtedly have contributed to the reasons for the Episcopal Letter and "then (wrote the Roman Catholic newspaper 'Het Binnenhof' of June 19th) the important question is not so much, whether the religious indifference of the people is caused by the activities of the N. V.V. (Netherlands Trade Union Association), the Humanists and the Labour Party, but rather whether these organizations which do not rest on Christian foundations, have tried to profit by the "breakdown" of Christendom.

It is a fact, however, that there is a "breakdown" and that people try to "serve it up" as a 'break-through' of Socialism. This does not mean that every 'break-through' of Catholicism is rejected; but that the 'break-through', in the form it was given after the war by the Labour Party, is definitely rejected. It remains possible that ere long, when the Catholic Netherlands will really be more integrally Catholic, the Church may state that it then considers the circumstances to be different."

Attitude of the Protestant Groups.

Noteworthy was the reaction from the Christian Anti-Revolutionary Party. On June 2nd the chief editor of the Anti-Revolutionary newspaper "Trouw" wrote among other things: "In the first place the Episcopal Letter deals with the structure of our political and social organizations. Will this structure be Christian or not? As such it is a declaration of war from the R.C. Church on the 'break-through' and on the principal vehicle of the 'break-through' type of thought, the Labour Party. It stands to reason that we heartily agree to this. We wish that the churches of the Reformation would be equally explicit on this point. The confessional Protestant churches ought also to see the danger the Roman Catholic Church sees, and should witness to it in their own way. This is imperative, because far too many members of those churches think that the membership in for instance the N.V.V. and in the Labour Party and in all kinds of neutral, but in essence liberal organizations, is compatible with the Christian faith."

Directly opposed to this was the brochure "Protestant Protest" by Mr. Fedde Schurer, a member of the Protestant community within the Labour Party, who regarded the attempt of the Netherlands Catholics to live in isolation from pure power-political considerations, as a threat to the interests of the Christian Oekumene and the national well-being. Schurer pointed among other things to the fact that at the latest elections, 60% of the votes given to the Labour Party, originated from members of the Dutch Reformed Church, apart from the Orthodox Reformed (Gereformeerden), Baptists, and Roman Catholic voters. "You (thus addresses Schurer himself to the Bishops) have classified the political group, for which we voted on account of our Protestant Christian faith, as 'un-Christian', and in doing so you have tried to place us outside Christendom. You have even accused us of furthering irreligiousness, you have called our groups a danger to Christian faith and Christian morals. You are like the servant in the Gospel of St. Matthew who was put by his master in charge of his household, in order that he should give the others food in due season, but when his master was away he began to beat his fellow-servants. You drive your flock together like sheep, in order to increase your political power and you dare to slander our name as Christians. Thank God we are Protestant Christians, made free from your criticisms and from your approval. It is not you who will decide if we belong to the Church of Christ, it is not you who knocks at the gate of the castle of political power with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Reactions of the Labour Party.

On June 8th the administrative body of the Labour Party, provoked by the Episcopal Letter, published a declaration in which among other things the following is said:

"The Episcopal Letter from the Dutch Bishops, entitled 'The Catholic in public life today', covers many spheres of life, upon which a political party cannot express any opinion, although it fully recognizes the importance of those spheres.

Obviously the Letter is of particular importance for the Roman Catholics in our country, and also for those who are members of the Labour Party and organized in the Catholic Working Group. They are free to decide their attitude about this, according to their own conscience. But certain parts of the Letter affect the whole Labour Party, and indeed, our whole Nation. For, if directions are given for such a large group as the Roman Catholic section of the population, as now has been done, concerning their social and political life, then this involves consequences for the structure of the whole of Dutch society. When then the Episcopate makes statements which affect the nature of party formation, then a point is brought into discussion which concerns not only the Catholics, but every citizen.

This has been done in such a way, that the Labour Party's raison d'être and its possibility of surviving as a party of the 'break-through' has been fundamentally questioned. The Labour Party therefore feels that it has the right and the duty to define clearly its attitude on this matter.

Eight years experience has proved that in our country - as in many other countries - co-membership in a party is possible between people of different ideologies, without infringing anyone's religious convictions.

It is not true that the Labour Party wants to separate religion from politics. In its party program the Labour Party recognizes emphatically the close connection between ideology and political insight and welcomes it in its members when they clearly show this relation also in their work for the party. So in the course of its existence it has richly experienced that its members are moved by their own deepest convictions to contribute to the common political task.

With this new approach the Labour Party has made a serious effort to rise above the fruitless distinction between 'neutral' and 'confessional' which had made political conditions in our country so rigid before the war. Where different spiritual tendencies in our nation had become completely estranged from each other and groups did not even understand each other's language any more, the Labour Party brought about a cooperation which may be of essential service to the unity of the nation with due respect to all differences.

While on the one hand the Labour Party stands for freedom and independence of political life, on the other hand it has always respected the rights and freedoms of the churches, and will always do so. In its party program it says in this connection: "We recognize that the churches regard it as their duty, for the sake of the spiritual and moral good of the people, to speak about political and social life." Political life, however, also has its own rights. The tension which may result from this, lays the responsibility on both sides. The text of the Letter justifies the fear that the way in which the conception "to be oneself" is held up as a pattern to the Catholics, will lead in practice to interpreting that idea more in the interests of the acquisition of political power than in the interests of a true religious life.

And neither for the sake of the purity of life in church and state in our country, nor for the sake of the principles of democracy and spiritual freedom, on which Dutch society is based and must remain founded, can the Labour Party ever agree that the freedom of choosing one's political party should be curtailed so as to put power in the hands of one religious party.

The Labour Party is not prepared to give up its character as a 'break-through' party. It remains loyal to its principle that in political cooperation, as embodied in the Party, there is room for all the religious convictions which live in our nation. Within the Labour Party it is still possible for Catholics and non-Catholics to work side by side in the political domain. If there were no longer an opportunity for the Catholic section of the population to give a positive answer to this, then the Catholics would place themselves in serious isolation.

Now that the very existence of the Labour Party as a party of the 'break through' has been threatened, the voters must be prepared to give a clear verdict about the bases of the formation of the political parties in our country. The administration of the Labour Party intends to give forceful and energetic leadership on this question.

In the 'break-through' ideals are voiced, for which there is more than ever a great need in our religiously divided country, and also in a Europe which is striving to unite. The Labour Party trusts that these ideals will meet with increasing agreement from all the spiritual and social groups of our people."

Cooperation in the Government threatened.

The public discussion dealt mainly with the danger of division among the Dutch people, a division which might very well stimulate anti-clericalism and prove detrimental to the national solidarity.

On July 3rd the Labour Party organized a National Cadre Day in Utrecht attended by leading persons including the prime minister, Dr. Drees, who protested in a controlled and dignified way against the Episcopal Letter. He and other speakers confirmed that the 'break-through' as the spiritual principle of the Labour Party is of far greater importance than the immediate political issue. It is this principle on which Socialists, who draw their inspiration from very different ideological sources, meet each other to realize common political and social ideals, and in this they receive a sense of responsibility for one another. Dr. Burger spoke on the possible political consequences of the Letter. If things should ever go so far that the Catholic section of the Labour Party might become amputated, and if the K.V.P. should prove simply to be a factor of political power (in which case the religious Catholics would have no other choice than to support it regardless of their own political wishes and of its political conduct), then both the Labour Party and the K.V.P. would have completely changed in character. "Such a fundamental change in the political situation would compel us to appeal to the electors", said Dr. Burger.

The following day Dr. van Doorn, the president of the K.V.P., broadcast a statement that the character of the K.V.P. as a party of principle and program is not changed by the Episcopal Letter. He critized the Socialist prime minister, Dr. W. Drees, for having spoken on the Cadre Day.

Dr. van Doorn further demanded an explicit decision from the Labour Party as to whether they wished to continue their cooperation with the K.V.P., or to break it off.

Reactions of the Trade Unions.

The Dutch trade unions also reacted to the Episcopal Letter, each in their own way. The president of the Catholic Labour Movement wholly supported the admonition from the Bishops, but on the other hand he fully understood that the (socialist) Dutch National Trades Union Association was painfully affected and felt offended. Mr. Ruppert, president of the Protestant Trade Union (C.N.V.) said on June 30th: "The emphatic advice to the Roman Catholics not to join the socialist trade union, appears just to me. If I have any criticism to make, it would be that there are other and in my opinion even stronger motives for advising people not to become members of the socialist trade union."

"If I were a Bishop", continued Mr. Ruppert, "then I would certainly write a letter to my fellow-Christians declaring that to me it is a complete riddle how a Christian can live within the Socialism of today. We are confronted by a threat to the most essential values in man and society. And we as trade union need to keep in touch with religion even more than we need bread."

On July 17th, after long deliberation, the socialist N.V.V. (Netherlands Trade Union Association) cancelled their cooperation with the Catholic Labour Movement (K.A.B.) and the Protestant Trade Union (C.N.V.), as organized in the Raad van Vakcentralen (Trade Union Council). The N.V.V.'s statement includes the following: "The N.V.V. regards it as an insult against which it must protest, that it should be included among the non-Christian tendencies in the country. In the N.V.V. there are united many people who do not consider themselves bound to any definite confession, together with a great number of Christian members of different churches, even including a considerable number of Roman Catholics. As a general directive for its work the N.V.V. has recognized in its party program the standards of love of one's neighbour, justice, truth, responsibility and respect for human personality. With fierce indignation the N.V.V. protests, therefore, against the imputation that it is to be feared that the N.V.V. will cause increasing indifference to the Christian Church and irreligiousness resulting in a weakening and decay of moral standards." "The N.V.V. understands and respects the disquietude of the Roman Catholic Church leaders concerning the question of secularization in the Netherlands. But the N.V.V. must indignantly reject the accusation that it is in any way guilty of exercising a secularizing influence." "The N.V.V. is deeply concerned by the spirit of isolationism which predominates in the Episcopal Letter and which constitutes a threat to freedom of conscience. This disquietude is not removed by the advice to Roman Catholic social organizations to cooperate with other organizations. For this advice is the logical result rather of a desire to exercise influence in a religiously divided country, rather than of an inner conviction of the need for cooperation, such as existed in such a fine way in our country during and after the Second World War. In principle one section of the population is being given precedence over the nation as a whole."

To the Netherlands Trade Union Association (N.V.V.) the prohibition against participating in the Socialist movement really means an attack on

the freedom of the trade union organization. Since the K.A.B. (Catholic Labour Movement) has expressed its warm agreement with the Episcopal Letter, and the C.N.V. (Protestant Trade Union) through its president, has challenged the N.V.V. in an unacceptable way, there is no longer any basis (according to the N.V.V.) for a regulated cooperation between the trade unions which should rest on 'respect for each other's principles and independence'.

Undoubtedly this breach means a step backwards in the development of the social order in the Netherlands, and the Communist Trade Union Congress may take advantage of this situation and try to fish in troubled waters. The time of solid cooperation which existed after the war, seems to have passed and in future it will only be possible to preserve contact incidentally and more loosely.

Political Perspectives.

On July 24th the Catholic Working Group in the Labour Party made known that it completely rejected the idea of going over to the K.V.P., and a further resolution as to whether it should remain within the Labour Party, was postponed.

In the meantime, at the beginning of the new Parliamentary Year, the greater part of the public political debates were devoted to the Episcopal Letter.

Dr. Burger for the Labour Party pointed out that the question now is far more fundamental than that of the formation of a non-confessional party; he considered that the elector's freedom to choose a political party, the very basis of democracy, was threatened. He regretted that after the publication of the Episcopal Letter the K.V.P. had not made a definite stand in favour of pure democratic principles. The Labour Party is certainly not tired of governing, but it cannot assume responsibility for the participation in the government of one or more parties which exercise an undermining influence on democracy.

Prof. Romme for the Catholic Peoples Party said that no interpretations of the Episcopal Letter could be expected of him, because that did not really belong to his field. Furthermore he said that he had not been consulted in advance about the drawing-up of the Letter. He rejected the accusation that in the Letter the Bishops should have given an authoritative message. "It is not a question of political power, but of religion. The action of the Bishops results from the nature of the Roman Catholic Church. Anyone who disputes this right, attacks our religious freedom." "If the mysterious attitude of the Labour Party should not prove detrimental to the well-being of our country", Prof. Romme said, "we have no desire to insist on a clear statement by the Labour Party concerning political cooperation. This even more so, now that the Government appears not to be disturbed and even intends to reduce taxes on the 1st of January 1956."

The leader of the Christian Historical Union, Mr. Tilanus, declared that for him as a Protestant, certain parts of the Letter were not acceptable, but any protest against the political consequences of the Episcopal Letter appeared to him incomprehensible. He understood the Letter as a message which a Church gives to its members. Also he appreciated the fact that religious principles are made a directive for political and social

life. He could not find anything in the Letter which should imply even the semblance of any danger whatever for democracy. "My freedom of thought as a Protestant is not affected by it", said Mr. Tilanus. The leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (Protestant), Mr. Schouten, took the same standpoint.

The chairman of the liberal group, Prof. Oud, considered the Bishops had the unmistakable right to speak, but no less unmistakable is the right to express criticism of what they said. Agreeing with Dr. Burger, he therefore did not consider Prof. Romme justified in thinking that criticisms of the Letter were an attack on religious freedom. Prof. Oud judged it dangerous when a Church starts advocating concrete measures in politics or gives its opinion regarding political policies. There are certain policies, such as National Socialism, Fascism and Communism which must be rejected as being un-Christian. But when pressure is applied against believers, then freedom and democracy are crushed. Then for the victims there is nothing left but a formal democracy. Prof. Oud compared Prof. Romme's view that anyone who does not want to obey the Bishops' admonition remains free to leave the Church, with the mistake made in former times by the liberals when remonstrating with the advocates of denominational education, then not yet acknowledged, saying that they were not obliged to send their children to a public school.

These debates have not had the political consequence of a break in the cooperation of the parties which form the government, but there is little confidence between the different parties in the government. In the meantime the debate on the principle involved continues in the Netherlands in private and in public, in the churches and in the press.

Catholic Opposition.

After accusations had been made against the Catholic press from different sides that the Catholic opponents of the Episcopal Letter were not given opportunity to present their views, various members of the Catholic Working Group in the Labour Party got an opportunity for an extensive exchange of views in the most important Catholic papers. Great attention was also paid to a number of "Te Elfder Ure" (At The Eleventh Hour) which was specially devoted to the Episcopal Letter; this paper is published by outstanding Catholic intellectuals. The following excerpt from the article by Dr. Bernard Delfgauw is of interest:

"The Letter is in general opposed to the idea of the 'break-through'. The tragic thing is, however, that if this 'break-through' does not come with us, it will come without us. Anyone who has a broader outlook, who knows what is going on among those who think in the Netherlands, and who knows what the young people are thinking, realizes that in a few decades the 'break-through' will be a fact. Now it is still possible to guide this 'break-through'. In a few decades this will be impossible. Then, probably, everything will have been trampled under foot which binds us together as Catholics, apart from our faith in the strictest sense. This oppresses us, because we are not spiritualists; we believe in the material and social incarnation of the spirit. If this incarnation, however, becomes rigid, so that everything is fixed and nothing more is free, then the spirit is in danger. We are afraid that Catholicism in the Netherlands is not incarnated but rigid. Are we really compelled to look on passively at this increasing rigidity, because the faith of the Dutch Catholics is so empty that

every external change brings this emptiness to light? Would not this thruth be more satisfactory than the insincerity of the present situation in which political and social organizations have to cover up the shortcomings of fait, but in doing so those shortcomings become even more painfully evident to the clear-sighted?"

Further Protestant Comment.

The division among Protestants with regard to the Episcopal Letter also seemed to be greater than was at first assumed. Prof. Schippers of the Gereformeerde Kerk (Orthodox Reformed Church), in his recently published brochure "The Episcopal Letter and our Struggle against the 'Break-Through'" regards the Episcopal Letter as a conscious step in the second stage of the road to a Holland dominated by Roman-Catholicism. The first phase was that of emancipation; this phase is now practically completed. We now have a second phase, that of the construction of a mode of life leading to what the Roman Catholics call "the natural order"; an order which is acceptable for everybody, but for the Roman Catholic adapted to a higher order, from which it derives its meaning. In the next phase public life will be dominated by the Catholic Church, i.e. the whole of public life will bear the stamp of Roman Catholicism. The way in which the Bishops direct the consciences of their church members, is not acceptable to Christians of the Reformation Churches. According to Prof. Schippers, the Anti-Revolutionary group ought to ask themselves, whether what has been gained by Christians is not menaced more by militant Roman Catholicism than by the Socialism represented in the Labour Party.

In their weekly paper the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church, through pastor Landsmann, have rejected the Episcopal Letter by virtue of the fact that Protestants cannot allow political pressure on their consciences; they fear also that democracy in the Netherlands is seriously weakened thereby. It has become known that the Dutch Reformed Church is preparing a Protestant Pastoral Letter, in which the Protestant view of the relationship between the Church and the social order is developed.

Of course, a review of this kind cannot do justice to the great variety of arguments brought forward in this fierce discussion. The discussion as a whole has once more shown how much lack of understanding on both sides, arising in all good faith from ignorance of the other's standpoint, there is between the representatives of the different ideologies. It is a lack of understanding which will not improve, now that there is a danger that the apostolate will be cut off externally by the Letter of the Bishops, as the Catholic socialist vanguard intends.

After all, the majority of the Catholics understands something else by the conception of democracy than the Socialists and Liberals, and it appears, once more, that they also approach the problem of the division between Church and State in a different way.

II

THE PATRIARCHATE OF MOSCOW:

Its Attitude to the State and to Church Order

by Dr. Hildegard Schaeder

(In connection with the visit to Moscow, in July (1954) of a group of representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany, headed by Dr. Gustav Heinemann, attention was again drawn to the question of the relationship between the Orthodox Church of Russia, more specifically the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Soviet State. Dr. Hildegard Schaeder, of the Evangelical Church's Office of Foreign Relations (Kirchliches Aussenamt), Frankfurt, who is well-informed on this subject and who accompanied Dr. Heinemann on his visit, has given her views in the August number of the German periodical, Kirche in der Zeit.)

"In my opinion Voltaire contradicted himself", an assistant to Karpow, the President of the "Office of the Ministerial Council of the USSR for Orthodox Church Affairs", said to me in a conversation during a reception given in our honour by the Minister in the Hotel National situated just opposite the Kremlin. We six members of the Evangelical Church in Germany from Western and eastern Germany, an unofficial and rather heterogeneous group, were the guests for three weeks of the Patriarch Alexius of Moscow and All Russia, the head of the Orthodox Christians in the Soviet Union. After a first meeting with our kind host, we were given the opportunity of paying a visit to the president of the "Office for Orthodox Church Affairs"; and he invited us to a party which was also attended by the Patriarch and by about 50 other leading members of the Moscow clergy and laity. Neither the President nor any of his staff were members of the Church. "I think Voltaire contradicted himself", said my neighbour. "On the one hand he wrote: 'If God did not exist, we should have to invent him'; on the other hand he demanded that the Church should be destroyed. My personal opinion is: church life should neither be encouraged, nor destroyed." And as far as we could see, that was indeed the present policy of the Soviet State towards the Church, "not to encourage it", i.e. either with funds or with propaganda, but "not to destroy it", i.e. not to block the indispensable sources and channels of an organised Church life. "The Government does not forget that the Orthodox believers constitute a large part of the Soviet people who elected the Government", affirmed a well-informed senior member of the clergy. (A similar attitude is expressed in a clerical letter written in 1926.)

Ever since its origin at the time of Constantine, the Orthodox Church has lived in close touch with the State, more specifically, in organic touch with the people as a whole, which might be compared to an ellipse with the Tsar and the Patriach as its two foci. But when, in 1721, Peter the Great abolished the Russian Patriarchate and established a "Most Holy National Synod" controlled by a secular Senior Procurator, side by side with the "National Senate", the balance was upset. And the large government building in Leningrad near the Neva, where the Senate used to hold its sessions in one wing and the Synod in the other, gives evidence still today of how in the Tsarist era the Church organisations were incorporated in and subordinated to the secular administration.

It is in this light that we must judge what Metropolitan Niklaus, the Patriarch's representative and head of the Church Office for Foreign Affairs, told us when explaining the present position of the Orthodox Church: "The separation in 1918 of the Church from the State was a very healthy measure, because it stopped the State from interfering in purely ecclesiastic matters." He added that any church interference in political affairs was also prohibited. Does this mean - can it mean in practice - that Church and State are today entirely independent? The answer is contained in a letter written in 1927 by Sergius, the predecessor of the present Patriarch.

"Only unwordly dreamers can imagine that a community as powerful as our Orthodox Church with all its organisations could exist quietly in a state by living in hiding from the Government... In our opinion the critics of our attitude will soon resume cooperation with us, after they have convinced themselves that it is only our relationship towards the Government which has undergone a change, and that our faith and our life as Orthodox Christians remain unaltered."

In his address to his Protestant guests, the Metropolitan Nicolaus stated that this letter was a turning-point in the relationship between Church and State since the October Revolution, and the beginning of a process of normalisation. What does this mean under the present circumstances, i.e. where there are two attitudes as diametrically opposed as an atheistic ideolo and an Orthodox Church? The head of the Orthodox Church Office for Foreign Affairs, Metropolitan Nicolaus, put his finger on the most critical aspect of this problem - the youth work done by the Church.

From his statements we learned some very important new facts. "After school and Church had been separated", said the Metropolitan, "the Church found several ways of replacing the religious instruction which had been struck from the school syllabus. Apart from the sermons preached at the main Sunday services - which are more carefully prepared now than under the Tsarist régime, the priests preach sermons (besseda) at evening services, chiefly on Saturdays and Sundays, but frequently also on two additional evenings in the week. These sermons last about an hour and give an interpretation of the Scriptures or the catechism. These addresses, as indeed all church services, are open to children and young people." One of the priests illustrated these statements by saying that in the previous year he had interpreted all the Epistles at evening discussion-groups, and that he had had an audience of over 100 people on week-days and over 1,000 people on Sundays. On these evenings there had also been opportunity for questions and answers.

Beyond a doubt, the Orthodox Church today is a community which not only prays to God and sings hymns, but which also preaches the Gospel and listens to what it has to say. It is clear, however, from the sermons printed in the Moscow Patriarchate's periodical and from collections of sermons that priests are allowed to refer to ecclesiastical events but not to concrete political and social problems of current interest. With regard to these problems the Church relies on the conscience of the individual Christian which, strengthened and guided by the devout fellowship of prayer and sacrament which we noticed everywhere in the services of worship, help to show him what path to follow in all matters of occupational and public life. Prayer and Sacrament are regarded as the centre of Orthodox life as a whole, not only in the monasteries but also in municipal and rural communities:

his is an unquestioned fact for the millions of church-goers, most of whom elong (it is true) to the middle and lower classes.

Another way of replacing religious instruction in schools cited by etropolitan Nicolaus is that families can invite a priest to teach a small rivate circle of people in their homes. This should, to some extent, counter-alance the influence lost by the Church since the October Revolution. In his context it must be mentioned that paragraph 122 of the Soviet Penal ode prohibits religious instruction to minors (under 18) in state and private chools and any infringement of this regulation is punished with up to twelve onths' penal servitude. Paragraph 125 of the same Code, however, prescribes sentence of six months' penal servitude for disturbing church services. uite obviously the Church is grateful for this kind of state protection, or Eastern Europeans know more about the terror of anarchy than people in estern Europe.

Church activities are considerably restricted by yet another state regulation: his prohibits any kind of organised charity except in case of war. However, is very noticeable that the Church encourages its members, with great uccess, to personal acts of charity and generosity in helping the people enerally, and in times of danger, as is evident from official government etters written to leading Orthodox Church personalities during the second orld War. And in 1945, Karpow, the minister in charge of ecclesiastical ffairs, said: "The government is now ready to believe that the Church is incere in its profession of loyalty to the State"; to our knowledge this tatement has not yet been contradicted by any government act.

In the opinion of Metropolitan Nicolaus another positive result of the omplete separation of Church and State is the financial independence of the hurch. The Church has no other commitments towards the State except loyalty. riests have to pay personal income tax. The Church, however, does not pay he State anything, nor does it receive any financial support from the State. here are no church taxes (tithes).

The Church lives financially on the voluntary contributions of its members. hese contributions are made up from the extra charge for the candles which hurch-goers present to the Church; from collections in church; from fees aid voluntarily for church ceremonies (the usual fee for a christening is 25 ubles). These paid ceremonies also include prayers and devotions for the iving and the dead. Out of these fees the monthly salaries of priests and eacons are paid; in Moscow these amount to 3,000 rubles for a priest and ,000 to 8,000 rubles for senior grades. Deacons are paid two-thirds of a riest's salary (we estimate the purchasing-power of the ruble at about 30 fenning, $0.08, 7d.)

All the expenses of the local church are paid for out of the candle and ollection money. In addition the parish office contributes a certain amount the diocesan administration. The boundaries of a diocese coincide with overnment district boundaries. There are 70 dioceses ("eparchies"). Each iocese has about 900 priests. Excluding the deacons, who are nevertheless lso members of the clergy, there are 40,000 priests and 20,000 churches in ussia today. Moscow with its 7 million people has 55 churches; Leningrad million inhabitants) has 14 churches; Kiev (one million inhabitants) has churches. There are 40 to 60 christenings per Sunday in the Moscow Church

of the Metropolitan Nicolaus; up to 250 in a Leningrad church. The total number of people attending the various services in this large church every Sunday is 15,000. In the Moscow diocese 80 per cent of the children are christened.

The diocese on its part contributes part of its revenues to the patriarchates's administration. These funds help to pay for the upkeep of two theological academies and ten seminaries for priests. The courses of all these institutes are of four years' duration. The senior grades of the clergy and church administration receive their training in the academies. Including the participants in correspondence courses, the number of students at an academy amounts to 500. The Leningrad Theological Academy library contains 120,000 theological works, among them 30,000 in the German language (dating mostly from before the first World War). Another concern of the patriarchate is to look after religious literature. Bibles have not been reprinted since 1926. But in addition to several volumes of sermons preached by the Patriarch Alexius and the Metropolitan Nicolaus, publications since 1952 included three basic theological text-books, one on liturgy, one on dogmatics and one on ethics, and also a church-calender for priests, with special chapters for the seasons of the ecclesiastical year and prescribed passages for Scripture lessons. The periodical issued by the patriarchate has a circulation of 25,000. Finally, the patriarchate finances the repair of church buildings and supports the Orthodox churches under its jurisdiction abroad.

The valuable information we received from the head of the Orthodox Church Office for Foreign Affairs was supplemented by Minister Karpow, President of the Office for Orthodox Church Affairs, and by his deputy, Bjélyschew.

The "Office of the Ministerial Council of the Soviet Union for Orthodox Church Affairs" has a two-fold function: (1) to deal with all problems which the Church cannot tackle single-handed, i.e. allocation of buildings which are let to the Church free of charge; provision of building material, raw materials and machines for workshops run by the Church, and paper for religious publications. (2) to see that the Church obeys the laws of the State. The Office was founded in October 1943; it is a purely governmental organ with five members, none of whom is a member of the Church. These are assisted by a staff, consisting especially of district officers from all over the Soviet Union. The Office is not authorised to interfere in purely ecclesiastical matters, such as questions of order of worship, appointment of priests, etc. But the Office is supposed to act as a liaison between the Government and the Church and progressively to bring about a normal relationship between them. Representatives of this Office in the provinces deal with the relations between priests and local state authorities. In addition, the office supervises the activities of Orthodox Church representives (agencies) abroad; of delegations coming from and going to other countries; it grants visas and deals with foreign currency questions. When Russia severed relations with the State of Israel, it was the concern of this Office to look after the Russian Orthodox Mission remaining there; it also regulates relations between the Church and the Foreign Office of the State.

With regard to the second function of this office, i.e. seeing that the Church observes the laws of the State, an important explanation was given: at the instigation of the Patriarch, the Church Council is authorised

to consider the amendment of any Act and to submit its suggestions to the Government. In accordance with the Patriarch's request, a series of ordinances have been re-examined. For instance, according to governmental law the Church in the Soviet Union was not at first a legal person. This status was granted to it by governmental decree of August 1945, in compliance with the request of the Patriarch. The Church now also has the right to build and to run agricultural projects, workshops , etc. Whereas in former times the Church was prohibited from establishing charity organisations, it can now set up committees to draw up pension schemes for priests. Monasteries are now allowed to run (for their own profit) mills and other agricultural, trade and industrial projects. The new Church statutes of January 1945 contain regulations further normalising relations between Church and State and revoking automatically the paragraphs of the government Decree of April 1929 relating to religious organisations. For, since Church and State reached an understanding in 1943, life in the Church is officially recognised as being solely under the jurisdiction of the Church.

This also means certain changes. For instance, in accordance with the old law of the Soviet Union, the local church sent a "call" to a priest; but in accordance with the new agreement of 1945, the priest is the head of the local parish and is appointed by the Bishop. The priest is confirmed in his office by the local representative of the Office for the Affairs of the Orthodox Church, and no longer by the Executive Committee of the town. The churches - groups of not less than 20 members - are registered by the Office, which only recognises churches for which the Bishop has appointed a priest. The result is a strictly centralised system.

Further measures are now under consideration, at the instigation of the Patriarch, to bring into effect the religious freedom laid down in the Constitution. Since the Office was set up in 1943 (we were told) there have been no conflicts with or complaints from the Church. On the other hand, the work of the Council is strictly in accordance with the Constitution and the laws. Official requests have not yet been made to extend the number of churches, which we noticed were always overcrowded. If the State were to register the number of baptisms, this would be an interference in church affairs and contrary to the law. "The State does not want to know what the Church is doing in these matters."

Although it is a law of the State that all men must do military service, exceptions are made in the case of priests because it is difficult for them to leave their churches, and also in the case of students if their health is poor or if they are about to take examinations. Many students do their military service before entering the Institute. During the war priests also took up arms or served as staff-sergeants.

What is the meaning of the statement that the Church has not yet made any complaints against the Office for Church Affairs, and on the other hand, that the Patriarch has not yet sent in certain important and even essential requests? The explanation must lie in the close working relationship and the inter-dependence of the Patriarchate and the Office for the Orthodox Church, which we had opportunity to observe on several occasions, and which was emphasised by both sides. Moreover, as both the State and the Church representatives pointed out, the Minister abides strictly by the instructions of the Government. On the other hand, the Patriarch is bound by the laws of the Church. The Government has left the Church-Minister in office, from the founding of the Office in 1943 until today. And his constant personal

contact with the Patriarch has perhaps spared the Government the trouble of refusing certain official requests from the Church, which it had no intention of granting. When I was permitted to be present at a conversation between Patriarch Alexius and Minister Karpow in the Patriarch's roomy bathing-establishment at Odessa, I was reminded of the mediaeval rule of East-European kingdoms (which was undoubtedly very apt and useful): that the ruler and the patriarch should meet daily - like man and wife - to discuss their common concerns and make their decisions together. To us Western Europeans, accustomed to the mediaeval antithesis between Emperor and Pope, this may sound like a fairy-tale. The mediaeval doctrine compares the role of the Church in its partnership with the State with that of a wife. And the best marriages work because the wife sometimes has to yield (even with tears), while at the same time she feels grateful for the protection she receives. But even if she is married to an unbeliever, the Bible promises that her chaste, pious demeanour will exercise a good influence on her husband (I. Peter 3, 2).

At the present time when personal matters are largely concealed if not stifled by systems and machinery, and when the Patriarch is not in touch with the actual ruler of the country, it is even more difficult for the Church to influence the State, and the danger of the Church itself being influenced will be even greater than it was in New Testament and mediaeval times. This gives us all the more reason to pray for the fulfilment of the Bible's promise, even in the case of the much-tempted Eastern Church which has passed through so much and whose life has still been preserved.

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III

"WAYS OF ELIMINATING RELIGIOUS SUPERSTITION"

(This is the title of the final chapter in a book by a Russian writer, P. Pawjolkin: Religious Superstition and Its Harmfulness. In this chapter the writer begins by restating the Marxist-Leninist theory that "religion" rests upon the capitalist economic system and the private ownership of the means of production. With the victory of socialism the social basis of religion is removed and in the Soviet Union the roots of religion have been destroyed with the liquidation of capitalism and the exploiting classes. Nevertheless religion persists! The writer's comments on this apparent contradiction are reproduced below. These excerpts are taken from the German edition of the book (Der religiose Aberglaube und seine Schadlichkeit) published by Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1954.)

In the Soviet Union the majority of the people in town and country have freed themselves from religious superstition. But although the roots of religion have been destroyed in our country, religious tendencies are still alive in the minds of many Soviet people. Why is it that religion still tenaciously survives in spite of the victory of Socialism?

Religious faith still survives in the Soviet Union as a relic of the old society, a relic of capitalism in the mind of the Soviet citizen. In his report given at the XVIIth Party Congress, Stalin admitted that the

relics of Capitalism could not be said to have been eradicated entirely from people's minds: "That is true, not only because people's minds do not change as quickly as their economic position, but also because capitalism around us is still alive, always trying to revive and maintain the relics of capitalism in industry and in the consciousness of people in the Soviet Union, and we Bolsheviks must constantly keep our powder dry against it." (J. Stalin: "Questions of Leninism", pp.564-565)

The community life of Soviet people has been socialised, because all Soviet citizens are working in socialist enterprises and offices; relationships between people at work in Soviet society are socialist in character - they are relations of comradely cooperation between people who are free from exploitation, and who are co-owners of the means of production. But people's minds do not change automatically when the social system changes; there is always a certain time-lag between social change and its reflection in people's consciousness, which never changes as fast as their economic position. That is why Soviet people still retain some old prejudices derived from the old system of capitalism and private ownership. These relics of past traditions linger in people's minds, because of the habits which the older generation acquired under the old social system, and also because of the traditions handed down by the older generation to the younger, owing to the inadequate education of some of the people and to their inadequate scientific enlightenment.

Lenin and Stalin point out that custom and prejudice are very strong. It is a very complicated and difficult task to overcome them, and they will not change by themselves. We must not wait passively until the vestiges of the old social system die out of their own accord; we must attack them actively, because they are injurious to society, because they prevent the people from advancing towards Communism. Lenin maintained that "victory over one's own inertia, one's own lack of discipline, one's own bourgeois egoism, and over the habits inherited by the worker and peasant from the accursed Capitalist system," (Lenin: "The Great Initiative", selected works in two volumes, Vol.II, page 561) involves a revolution which is more difficult and more important than the fall of the bourgeoisie. In his paper on "The Results of the XIIIth Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party" (1924) Stalin writes: "The old habits, traditions and prejudices, which we have inherited from the old social system, are the most dangerous enemies of Socialism." (Stalin, Works, Vol.6,p.222)

Bourgeois propaganda from abroad tries every means of reviving and maintaining religious prejudice among the Soviet people through the press, the radio and through its agents. In order to promote religious superstition, bourgeois propaganda makes use of natural catastrophes such as drought, or bad harvests, and also of the danger of the new world war that is being prepared by the American and English imperialists.

As already stated in the previous chapters, religious prejudice hinders the development of the creative powers of the people. That is why the Communist Party and the Soviet state cannot be indifferent towards religious superstition. That is why the Communist Party makes propaganda for the atheistic, materialistic view of life and organises education, in order to overcome religious prejudice throughout the Soviet Union.

Carefully and patiently, without hurting the feelings of religious believers, the Communist Party explains (through Communists and other progressive workers, and especially through the intelligentsia) the harm done by religious superstition; it exposes the reactionary attitude of religion in social problems, and shows how the exploiting classes have made use of religion, and are still making use of religion, against peace, against Socialism and against democracy.

In his work "Marxism and the National Question", Stalin wrote: "The working-class party 'will always protest against the persecution of Catholicis and of Protestantism, it will always support the right of nations to practice any religion they like, but at the same time, in the interests of the proletariat, it will agitate against Catholicism, Protestantism and Greek Orthodoxy, in order to bring about the triumph of the Socialist view of life'. (Stalin's Works, Vol.2, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953, p.323)

Both Lenin and Stalin stress the fact that the working-class party cannot regard religion as a private matter for the party-members: "In the party of the Socialist proletariat", wrote Lenin, "religion is not a private matter. Our party is an association of class-conscious, progressive champions of freedom for the workers. An association of this kind cannot remain indifferent in the face of the lack of class-consciousness, the ignorance and obscurantism of religious belief." (Lenin: "Socialism and Religion", selected works in 12 vols. Vol.XI, p.386)

In order to liberate the workers from all forms of oppression, the working-class party must wage a struggle against religious prejudice, and it is indeed doing so. In his discussions with the first American workers' delegation in 1927, Stalin said: "The Party cannot remain neutral towards religion, and it carries on anti-religious propaganda against all forms of religious prejudice, because the Party wishes to promote scientific knowledge, and religious prejudice is directed against scientific knowledge, for religions are always opposed to scientific knowledge. Cases like that in America, where some Darwinists were recently condemned, are impossible in Russia, because it is the policy of the Party to promote scientific knowlegde in every way.

"The Party cannot remain neutral towards religious prejudice and it will do propaganda against such prejudice, because that is one of the sure ways of undermining the influence of the reactionary clergy, who support the exploiting classes and preach subordination to them.

"The Party cannot remain neutral towards the reactionary clergy, who poison the minds of the working masses." (Stalin, Works, Vol.10, p.116)

In order to overcome the religion which still survives, every Soviet citizen must cooperate in strengthening Communism and sharing in the government of his country. In the process of socialist construction, in the reorganisation of society and the control of Nature for the benefit of the whole people the workers have clear proof of what they can achieve through their work and of the strength of the masses led by the Communist Party.

By playing an active part in building up the Communist system, the workers perceive that it is they themselves, the workers, and not any imaginary supernatural forces or God, that are transforming the face of Nature and society...

The source of strength of the Bolshevist Party, that source of their victories at home and abroad, is the fact that their policy is founded on scientific facts, based on a recognition of the laws of Nature and of social development, that it corresponds to the objective tendencies of social progress and expresses the interests of the most progressive class of society - the workers - who are the decisive force in society.

In order to overcome the religious elements which still survive in the minds of Soviet citizens, the educational programme of the Soviet State carried out by the Communist Party is of great importance.

The Bolshevist Party does atheist propaganda especially by educating the workers in the spirit of Marx and Lenin, and by propagating the doctrines of dialectic and historical materialism, and spreading knowledge about politics and science. The publication and study of the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin is of the greatest importance for the propagation of the ideas of Marx and Lenin. The classical works on Marxism-Leninism are printed in the Soviet Union in huge editions and thus made available to every worker.

Under the leadership of the Bolshevist Party, scientific, educational, anti-religious propaganda is carried on in the Soviet Union by the trade-unions, the Komsomol, the cultural colleges of enlightenment and the scientific societies, and also by the united association for the propagation of political and scientific knowledge.

Led by the Communist Party, the Soviet intelligentsia in town and country does a great service to the workers, in carrying on scientifically-enlightened anti-religious propaganda, thus helping them to free themselves from such relics of the old society as religion.

In its resolution on "The Organisation of scientifically-enlightened Propaganda" (1944) the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party pointed out that scientific propaganda is helping tremendously to raise the cultural level of the workers in the Soviet Union and to eradicate the remains of uncertainty, superstition and prejudice.

"The scientific education must consist mainly in explaining natural phenomena, explaining the achievements of science, technics and culture. Lectures and discussions must be arranged among the people, especially in the villages, and popular pamphlets and essays must be read to them on the way the universe is made up, the formation of the sun and the earth, the most important facts of astronomy, the origin and development of life, the origin of man, the physiology of the human body, the origin and life of plants and animals, the causes of illness and their prevention and cure, the scientific basis for agriculture and stock-raising, methods of increasing the harvests and improving stock, sources of energy and their application, etc. The lectures on scientific subjects must be popularised and must at the same time correspond to the present state of science; the lectures and discussions must be illustrated with pictures, films, maps, exhibits, etc." ("Propaganda and agitation in Resolutions and Documents of the Russian Communist Party", Moscow 1947, p.475, Russian edition.)

The propagation of scientific knowledge must be penetrated by the dialectic-materialist ideology and be closely connected with the practical tasks of building up the Communist system; its aim must be to introduce the new technics into production, to master technics completely and to increase productivity.

The whole social life of the Soviet people is built up deliberately on a scientific basis. It is the workers themselves who work out their plans and accept them. It is also the workers who carry them out. They see from their own experience that the whole world around them develops along natural lines and that there is no room in it for imaginary conceptions like God and other supernatural forces.

The great engineering achievements of Communism - the erection of enormous electricity works on the Volga, the Dnieper, Don and Amu-Darja, the building of irrigation canals in the dry steppe-lands and deserts - are very important for the propagation of the scientific outlook and for anti-religious propaganda. The erection of Communist buildings, the steady growth of the technical output of industry, the introduction of the most modern methods into agriculture (tractors, combine mowers and threshers and other machines), the success of the Stakanov people in town and country, the achievements of the collective farmers in the struggle for good harvests every year, the introduction of Mitschurin's successful biological discoveries into agriculture, the cultivation of new kinds of plants which are more productive, and of new types of cattle - all this proves man's growing power over the elementary forces and provides overwhelming proof for the atheistic point of view. This material is an inexhaustible source of printed and oral propaganda in favour of scientific atheism.

In educating the workers for Communism, and overcoming the elements of the old tradition which still survive in the form of religion, etc., an important part is played by literature and art. Since the time of Radischtchev, Puschkin and Belinski, Russia's fine classical literature has carried the ideas of the atheists to the masses and unmasked the capitalist order and the reactionary role of religion and the Church as servants of the exploiting class. The artistic and advertising work of Radischtchev and Puschkin, Herzen and Belinski, Tschernyschevski and Dobroljubow, Schewtschenko and Pissarev, Nekrassov and Saltykev-Schtschedrin, Tschechow and Gorki educated their readers, and are still educating them, in the anti-religious spirit, and submit religion and the Church to deep and intelligent criticism.

The fine Soviet literature and art have not only continued the atheistic traditions of classical Russian literature; they have strengthened its educational, anti-religious influence. The works of Majakovski and Demjan Bedny, Maxim Gorki and Serafimovitsch, Alexei Tolstoi and Scholochev, and the whole of Soviet literature, are rich sources for educating the readers in the spirit of atheism. The Soviet literature and art impregnated with the ideas of Marx and Lenin educate the workers' faith in the strength of the people - as led by the Communist party - and make them realise the revolution that has been brought about by science, which leaves no room for religious superstition.

While the bourgeoisie misuses every form of art (music and song, painting and sculpture, poetry, the cinema, etc.) in order to propagate idealism and religious obscurantism, the working class and their Party must use art to educate the masses in the spirit of Communism - the spirit of the most progressive and scientific dialectical materialist ideology.

The elimination of religion in the minds of the workers, and their adoption of the scientific views of dialectical materialism will contribute towards the further development of the creative powers of the people, and will hasten the advance of Soviet society to the victory of Communism.

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IV

A VILLAGE IN EAST GERMANY

(The following is a report on life in a village in the East Zone of Germany, by a recent visitor.)

It is a small village . . . about 800 inhabitants. Although there are no Russians in the village and one sees no Russian soldiers walking around, there are a certain number of people (not natives of the village) who have been specially trained in Russia to do political work in villages. These people have their "office" in the centre of the village and it is called the "Politbüro". The burgomaster himself is not a communist. He was made burgomaster by the communists (they change the burgomaster about once a year) and does his job in constant terror of the "Politbüro" leaders. About one third of the village population has officially joined the SED party, but I was told that in reality only a handful of these are communists.

There are still a number of people living in the village who had been evacuated there during the war and then, when the war was over, having nowhere to go they stayed. But these are mostly elderly people. Everyone has food cards and the rations are small. This does not matter for the farmers, but the old evacuees who have to live on their ration cards and do not have the money to shop in the "HO shop" (state retail stores) in which one can buy everything at a price, are kept very busy trying to obtain extra food from the farmers.

The bigger the farms, the worse off the farmers are, because the bigger the farm the more they have to give up. One bad harvest, or if for any other reason the crop is bad and they cannot fulfil their "quota", will ruin them. No excuse, however valid, is accepted by the Politbüro. Officially a meeting is called of all the farmers and they are asked if they can between them make up the missing amoung in a certain farmer's quota. But since all the farmers work on a very narrow margin, they can, at least in most cases, not undertake to make up the missing amount. The farmer is then accused of "sabotage" and of inefficiency in running his farm. There is a court case and he is sentenced to prison (for varying periods up to 20 years). As soon as he has been arrested, the family is

ordered off the farm and the farm is confiscated and new people are brought in to run the farm. Because of such action some of the wealthiest farmers, who for some reason could not fulfil their quota, committed suicide with their whole family. The two wealthiest farmers were arrested as soon as the Russians occupied the village in September of 1945, and although they had not been more nazi than others they were accused of having enriched themselves under the nazis and were sentenced to 20 years hard labour in Buchenwald.

The smaller farmers are best off. If they own under 3 morgens of land (one morgen equals about two acres) they are considered as "Selbstversorger" which means they only have enough to live on themselves, and do not have to give up anything. One woman told me, for example, that since her husband died, one of her sons fell in the war and her other son fled to the West, she runs the farm herself and manages quite well. She has one cow, one pig, and 20 chickens (she has to give up a certain quota of eggs). In her small farm house she is allowed to occupy one room and the kitchen, all the other rooms have been requisitioned and have families living in them.

There is, however, one thing in the village which pleases all the farmers alike: Where before the farmer ploughed his own land, perhaps with the help of oxen or even a couple of horses, he now only need put his name down in a book at the Politbüro and when his turn comes, the ploughing machine (owned by the Politbüro) will plough all his land in a very short time. Payment is made by the hour for the use of the machine and is very little. The same sort of thing happens when harvesting time comes. The Politbüro owns two machines for cutting and tying the corn. All the farmers make full use of these services, thereby being able to get rid of their horses and saving food. Also, whereas all the farmers' wives used to bake their own bread in order to save corn, they no longer do this; they all buy the bread at the village bakery - a thing which they can still not get used to because for so many years they baked their own bread.

The Politbüro has tried to establish a collective farm. It started off well, but the farmers concerned soon lost interest, the women who were also supposed to work on the land, began to find excuses for not going out, the men began to get behind with their work and finally after much fuss, the project was liquidated. But it is said that the Politbüro is going to try once more.

One very interesting thing: One sees no youth in the village, i.e. young men between say 18 and 25 or so. They have all fled to the West. It is difficult for the families when the sons run away. The families have to prove that they knew nothing about the son's intention etc., but they are under constant observation and all the son's private property, such as a motorcycle, bicycle or the like, is confiscated.

There is a good deal of illness and there is no doctor or dentist in the village. The doctor who had previously been responsible for the village and always came over from the nearest town, poisoned his wife and four children and hanged himself soon after the Russions came. Now a doctor and a dentist come to the village "pub" once a week and people can go and consult them. The doctor practically never writes out any prescriptions for medicine because medicines are very short and people must try

somehow to get them from Western Germany.

The Church suffers relatively little interference. There is much more church life than there was during the Nazi time. The church building has now been repainted and a new pastor has been installed. There are regular services and the church is always full. Of course, there is always one person from the Politbüro at the services, to keep a check on what the pastor says - or does not say. But the village people have got used to that and take no notice of it. Children are allowed to have Sunday School lessons in the church, but in the village school there is no religious instruction at all. While under the Nazis there was only one village school master, there are now four and the general education of the children is much better than it used to be. Once a week in the "pub" a film is shown - of course only Russian films, but no war films or anything to do with militarism.

The strikes and revolts of the 17th of June 1953 were a great disappointment to the village people. Their hopes had risen very high when they first heard of the revolt, and when they heard that it had been beaten down, everyone - except of course the 2 or 3 communists in the village - was very downhearted.

Letters and parcels arriving from Western Germany are apparently rarely censored. Newspapers from Western Germany are, however, not allowed in. People are allowed to travel to the West Zone; they simply go to the Politbüro, hand in their ID card and apply for a "provisional passport" which is valid from 1 to 4 weeks. Immediately upon their return they have to report. Quite a number of the village people have some kind of relatives in Western Germany and have already been there. With the exception of the few communists in the village, the people look on the West Zone of Germany as a kind of paradise of freedom and plenty. The people are allowed to buy their train tickets with East-Marks, but when they cross the border they have to show what money they have and have to show the same amount of money when they return, that means they are not allowed to spend anything at all while they are away. Of course, they are strictly forbidden to have any West-Marks at all. But most people who travel to Western Germany manage to hide some money somewhere and change it when they get to the West, although the rate of exchange is 1:4, which makes everything most expensive for these people.

One sees very few cars in the village, only high ranking communists have autos, and the doctor and the dentist, etc. who come to the villages once a week. Even if a person might be able to afford a car, most people are afraid to buy one as they would soon be labelled "capitalists".

Clothes can be bought, but the quality is shoddy. Most people try to get those things from Western Germany somehow. One can buy nylon stockings; they are not called "nylon", but bear some Russion name and are apparently a Russian invention. They are very expensive.

Elections are a farce. Someone from the Politbüro stands next to the person as he makes his vote, which means that practically everyone is too afraid to dare to vote for anything but the SED.

The nearest hospital is five miles. It is a small hospital and people from outlying villages have not a hope of getting there, however necessary it might be.

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